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SECRET

Department of State

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INCOMING
 PAGE 02 OF 04 SAN SA 15476 290526Z
 ACTION NODS-00

C03/03 007663 NOD373

INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 /000 W

-----255045 290529Z /11

 O 290527Z DEC 84
 FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1420

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 15476

NODIS

 E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ES
 SUBJECT: COUP REPORTS: A SYNTHESIS

1. SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT

 2. WE'VE PROBABLY SENT IN MORE REPORTING TODAY ON
 COUP PLOTTING THAN CAN BE COMFORTABLY DIGESTED IN ONE
 SITTING.

 3. THE SUM OF IT IS THAT THERE IS CLEARLY A MOVE AGAINST
 DUARTE BEING FORCEFULLY ADVOCATED BY A GROUP OF MILITARY
 OFFICERS LED BY COL. SIGIFREDO OCHOA, BUT SO FAR IT SEEMS
 TO BE CONFINED TO A FAIRLY SMALL NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL
 MALCONTENTS. THEY HAVE ASSERTED THAT THEY HAVE A
 SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF BACKING, BUT MUCH OF THIS SEEMS
 QUESTIONABLE. THEY CLAIM THAT AIR FORCE COMMANDER BUSTILLO
 IS WITH THEM, BUT I HAVE YET TO SEE CONVINCING EVIDENCE
 THAT HE HAS IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO ACT; THEY
 ALSO, MORE ALARMINGLY, ARE REPORTED
 TO HAVE CHIEF OF STAFF BLANDON ON THEIR SIDE. ON THE
 BASIS OF ALL THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, I STRONGLY DOUBT THAT
 THIS IS THE CASE, AND SUSPECT THAT BLANDON--A KEY FIGURE
 FOR THE SUCCESS OF A COUP ATTEMPT--IS SIMPLY NODDING
 SAGELY, MAINTAINING EYE CONTACT WHILE WATCHING THEIR HANDS.

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HE HAS TOLD US HE WAS APPROACHED BY TWO RIGHT-WING BUSINESS TYPES WITH BAGS OF MONEY, AND HAS TIPPED TO US THAT THE FORTHCOMING "GENERAL ORDER", EXPECTED EARLY NEXT WEEK, WILL CONTAIN SOME KEY PERSONNEL CHANGES INTENDED TO DISRUPT THE PLOTTING. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] I ALSO THINK IT IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT WE ARE GETTING THIS INFORMATION FROM SOURCES CLOSE TO OCHOA WHO MAY BELIEVE IT TO BE TRUE, AND THAT IT IS CONTRADICTED BY OTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE.

4. IN ANY EVENT, WE HAVE METHODICALLY TAKEN OUR POLLS, AND THE ESTADO MAYOR SEEMS SOLIDLY BEHIND VIDES AND BLANDON AND VIDES AND BLANDON SEEM SOLIDLY BEHIND PRESIDENT DUARTE. THE SECURITY FORCES (NATIONAL POLICE, HACIENDA POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD) APPEAR TO BE LOYAL, AND BLANDON IS CONFIDENT THAT THE SITUATION IS MANAGEABLE AND IS BEING MANAGED.

5. WE HAVE SOME WORK TO DO WHEN THE AMBASSADOR RETURNS SUNDAY AFTERNOON, BUT I DON'T THINK, ON THE BASIS OF ALL THAT WE KNOW--AND WE HAVE DONE A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF DIGGING--THAT THERE IS A NEED TO TAKE PRECIPITOUS U.S. ACTION BEFORE THAT TIME. NOTHING SEEMS TO BE IMMINENT (DEFINED AS AT LEAST THE END OF NEXT WEEK). AND EVEN THIS MAY WELL SIMPLY BE--AS A NUMBER OF THOSE WE HAVE TALKED TO ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE HAVE TOLD US--"THE USUAL CHRISTMAS BACKGROUND MUSIC" WHEN SALVADORAN MALCONTENTS CUSTOMARILY TELL EACH OTHER HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO OUST THE CORRUPT POLITICIANS AND RESTORE (MILITARY) ORDER TO THE LAND.

6. IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO UNDERSTATE OR UNDERESTIMATE THE DANGER SIGNS, AND WORSE TO DO NOTHING ABOUT THEM. BUT

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT OUR ACTIONS BE DELIBERATE AND THOROUGHLY-CONSIDERED, AND I BELIEVE WE CAN AFFORD TO



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AWAIT THE RETURN OF THE AMBASSADOR FOR THIS. WE NEED TO
DO SOME FAIRLY STRAIGHT-FORWARD TALKING TO SOME PEOPLE
AROUND THIS TOWN: THE PERSON BEST PLACED TO DO THAT
WITH THE PUNCH IT NEEDS IS PICKERING.

PASSAGE



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 ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 /000 W

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O 290614Z DEC 84
 FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1421

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 15477

NODIS

FOR ASST. SEC. MOTLEY

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ES
 SUBJECT: REPORTS OF COUPS

1. SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT
2. SUMMARY: AT THIS STAGE, IT IS REASONABLY EVIDENT THAT THERE IS A PLOT AFOOT TO UNDO THE DUARTE GOVERNMENT, BUT IT IS INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT IT IS NOT YET AT A VERY ADVANCED STAGE OR EVEN VERY WELL-DEFINED. NOR IS THE TIMING CLEAR, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE ANY CONCERTED ACTION TO MOVE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IS AT LEAST A COUPLE OF WEEKS INTO THE NEW YEAR. THE EXTENT OF THE THREAT IS NOT CLEAR (THOSE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S SIDE ARE TELLING US WITH VIRTUAL UNANIMITY THAT IT IS NOT GREAT). BUT IT IS AT LEAST CLEAR THAT WE NEED TO DO SOME MORE MISSIONARY WORK WITH THOSE WHO MIGHT BE INFLUENCED BY US. MAKE OBVIOUS TO ALL THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO SEE A NON-CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION TO WHATEVER GRUDGES THE MAL-CONTENTS HARBOR. AND OTHERWISE GET WITH DUARTE AND HIS TRUSTED ADVISERS TO ENSURE THAT THEY KNOW ABOUT THE SPECIFIC DANGERS WE CAN IDENTIFY AND THAT THEY MOVE TO PROTECT THE GOVERNMENT FROM THESE THREATS. WE HAVE METHODICALLY WORKED KEY INDIVIDUALS IN THE MILITARY, IN

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THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND ON THE POLITICAL SIDE OF THE HOUSE, AND ARE SATISFIED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE IS A PLOT IN PROGRESS, IT IS NOWHERE NEAR ITS DENOUEMENT. THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENT AT THIS TIME APPEARS TO BE THE "CONSTITUTIONAL" SHOWDOWN, AND IT WILL NOT BE PLAYED OUT UNTIL LATE NEXT WEEK AT THE VERY EARLIEST. ACCORDINGLY, APART FROM MONITORING VITAL SIGNS, I RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT MOVE TO TRY TO DIRECTLY EXERT FURTHER INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION UNTIL AMBASSADOR RETURNS SUNDAY AFTERNOON, CAN BE BRIEFED, AND CAN JOIN ACTION. WE NEED TO TALK TO BUSTILLO, BUT THE AMBASSADOR IS THE ONE WHO SHOULD DO THIS. WE ALSO OBVIOUSLY NEED TO TALK TO DUARTE, AND ALTHOUGH I CAN DO THAT, IT SHOULD PROBABLY COME AFTER THE DISCUSSION WITH BUSTILLO, AND FOR THAT REASON, SHOULD LOGICALLY BE DONE BY THE AMBASSADOR. IN SUM, I RECOMMEND THAT WE CONTINUE TO MOVE OUT AROUND THE AMBIT BUT DEFER FURTHER DIRECT ACTION UNTIL THE AMBASSADOR HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW MATTERS FOLLOWING HIS RETURN ON SUNDAY. END SUMMARY.

3. WE HAVE NOW HAD EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS WITH FOUR MORE OF THE KEY PLAYERS--BLANDON, REVELO, GOLCHER AND ABRAHAM RODRIGUEZ (WHO I CHOSE TO TALK TO RATHER THAN GO DIRECTLY TO DUARTE). THE SUM OF THEIR VIEWS IS THAT WHILE THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TALK ABOUT COUP PLOTTING, NO ONE SHOULD BE TOO ALARMED; THE LEADERSHIP IS WATCHING MATTERS CAREFULLY AND IS CONFIDENT THAT IT CAN MANAGE THINGS.

4. BLANDON TOLD STEELE THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BAD APPLES, WAS WATCHING THEM CAREFULLY, AND PLANNED IN NEXT WEEK'S "GENERAL ORDERS" TO SHAKE THINGS UP A BIT. HE KNEW THAT BOTH OCHOA AND TRUJILLO (WHO HAS

BEEN "IN EXILE" IN ARGENTINA) WERE IN TOWN AND WERE TALKING WITH THEIR BUDDIES OVER CHRISTMAS DRINKS. HE KNEW



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THERE WERE OTHER MALCONTENTS AS WELL, INCLUDING JAIME FLORES (1ST BRIGADE), LOPEZ YANEZ (6TH BRIGADE-USULUTAN), STABEN (ARCE BATTALION IN SAN MIGUEL), AND BENJAMIN RAMOS (DM-1) WHO ARE WANDERING AROUND TESTING THE WATERS FOR A COUP. BUT BLANDON IS CONFIDENT THAT HE HAS THE FIRM SUPPORT OF THE ESTADO MAYOR AND OF KEY MILITARY UNITS (INCLUDING, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE 1ST BRIGADE, NOW HEADED BY JAIME FLORES BUT WHICH ONCE BELONGED TO BLANDON, AND WHICH, BLANDON BELIEVES, REMAINS LOYAL TO HIM.)

5. COL. GOLCHER (HACIENDA POLICE) AND COL. REVELO (NATIONAL POLICE) HAVE BOTH TOLD US THEY CONSIDER THE COUP TALK PART OF THE NORMAL "CHRISTMAS BACKGROUND MUSIC"--A TIME WHEN LIKE-MINDED (BAD) PEOPLE GET TOGETHER AND MARINATE THEMSELVES IN PLANS TO OUST POLITICIANS WHO DO NOT ACT "IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY." REVELO SAID FLATLY THAT THE CONDITIONS FOR A COUP DO NOT EXIST AT THIS TIME: THE MILITARY IS UNHAPPY OVER SOME OF THE THINGS DUARTE HAS DONE, BUT THERE ARE FEW, IF ANY, PURELY MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS THAT WOULD PROVOKE ACTION AGAINST THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT. FOR A COUP TO TAKE PLACE, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CONSENSUS AMONG THE MILITARY TO ACT. THERE IS NO PRESENT CONSENSUS; THEREFORE, ANYONE WISHING TO TRY A COUP WOULD HAVE TO BE WILLING TO TAKE ON OTHERS IN THE MILITARY, AND A MILITARY VS. MILITARY FIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE. EVEN THE AIR FORCE WOULD HAVE TO PAUSE AT

THE THOUGHT OF BOMBING ANOTHER MILITARY UNIT (DEFENDING THE GOVERNMENT): "IF THE AIR FORCE BOMBED A GARRISON, WHAT WOULD THAT DO TO MILITARY UNITY?" GOLCHER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF PERPETUAL WOULD-BE PLOTTERS, BUT ASSERTED CONFIDENTLY THAT THE HIGH COMMAND

WOULD BE LOYAL TO VIDES CASANOVA, AND THAT VIDES WOULD BE LOYAL TO DUARTE. REVELO AND GOLCHER WERE EQUALLY



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CONFIDENT ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF THEIR OWN MEN TO THEM: "THE
POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES ARE NOT A DELIBERATIVE
BODY; THEY FOLLOW ORDERS RATHER THAN ARGUE OVER WHAT
THOSE ORDERS SHOULD BE."

6. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE OF THE HOUSE, THE VARIOUS
PARTIES IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ARE THOROUGHLY
ENMESHED IN THEIR OWN CONSTITUTIONAL FRACAS, BUT THE
UPSHOT IS A SIMPLE ONE: THE PRESIDENT HAS APPARENTLY
RESOLVED TO BUCK THE ELECTORAL LAW/LINE ITEM VETO
QUESTION BACK TO THE ASSEMBLY AND PERHAPS ULTIMATELY
TO THE SUPREME COURT, AND INTENDS TO OFFER TO TRY TO
WORK OUT AN ACCOMMODATION SATISFACTORY TO ALL. THE BALL
WILL THEREFORE SHORTLY BE BACK IN THE ASSEMBLY'S COURT, AND
THUS THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR THE POLITICIANS TO THROW
IN THEIR HANDS IN FAVOR OF A NON-CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION.
DUARTE IS BEING ADVISED TO ACCEPT WHATEVER THE OUTCOME--
AND ANNOUNCE IN ADVANCE THAT HE WILL ABIDE BY IT--AS A
FACE-SAVING WAY TO DE-FUSE THE MATTER. WE HAVE HEARD
FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES
THAT THE TALK OF "IMPEACHMENT", WHICH WAS THE RIGHT'S
FIRST REACTION WHEN DUARTE LINED-OUT TWO PROVISIONS OF
THE ELECTORAL LAW LAST WEEK, HAS VIRTUALLY DIED. THERE
ARE DOUBTLESS THOSE AMONG THE ARCH-RIGHT WHO WILL NOT BE
MOLLIFIED BY A SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT AGAINST THE PRESI-
DENT OR A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION, BUT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE
TO DETECT ANY WIDESPREAD SENTIMENT AMONG THE LARGE
MAJORITY OF ASSEMBLY MEMBERS FOR PUSHING THIS ONE BEYOND
A JUDICIAL REBUFF TO THE GOVERNMENT.

7. FINALLY, WE HAVE KEPT CLOSE TRACK OF THE WHEREABOUTS

AND DOINGS OF KEY MILITARY UNITS: THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES WHICH WOULD SUGGEST ANY PREPARATIONS FOR A MOVE-
MENT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THE ARCE AND ATONAL
BATTALIONS ARE IN THE FIELD CONDUCTING OPERATIONS
AGAINST GUERRILLA FORCES DURING THE INTERREGNUM BETWEEN



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THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S STAND-DOWNS. THE BELLOSO
BATTALION HAS AN OPERATION IN PROGRESS AGAINST GUERRILLAS
ON THE SAN VICENTE VOLCANO FROM THE WEST; THE CANAS
BATTALION FROM THE EAST. THE AIRBORNE BATTALION (THE
NATIONAL READY-RESERVE) IS AT ILOPANGO; THE ATACATL
IS AT HOME WITH ONE OF ITS UNITS ENGAGED IN CHALATENANGO IN
AN OPERATION WITH THE 4TH BRIGADE. THE PONCE IS IN GARRI-
SON; THE CUSCATLAN IS IN THE FIELD. ALL OF THE INSTRU-
MENTS ARE RIGHT WHERE THEY SHOULD BE ON THEIR GAUGES.

8. IN SUM, THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF PLOTTING, BUT IT
LOOKS LIKE IT IS PRETTY WELL CONFINED TO A HANDFUL OF
NOT UNUSUAL SUSPECTS, PRIME AMONG THEM OCHOA, AND POSSIBLY
BUSTILLO. OCHOA IS DEADLY SERIOUS, AND HAS THE (PROVEN)
CAPACITY TO ACT PRECIPITOUSLY. BUSTILLO HAS NO REASON
TO ACT RIGHT NOW AND A LOT NOT TO, INCLUDING HIS PENDING
PROMOTION TO GENERAL AND POSSIBLE MOVE INTO THE CHIEF OF
STAFF'S JOB IF VIDES RETIRED AND BLANDON SUCCEEDED HIM.
BUT BUSTILLO MAY BE BEING PUSHED TO JOIN A PLOT BY RIGHT-
WING ASSOCIATES OF HIS WIFE AND BY HOT-HEADS IN THE
MILITARY LIKE OCHOA. AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, HOW-
EVER, IT LOOKS LIKE THERE IS AS YET NO DEFINITE PLAN FOR
EXECUTION OF A COUP, AND NO DATE SET BEYOND WAITING
TO SEE WHETHER THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RULES AGAINST
DUARTE (AND, IN THE HOPES OF THE RIGHT WING OF ARENA AND
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH IT SUCH AS OCHOA,
PERHAPS IMPEACHES HIM).

9. BALANCED AGAINST THAT, VIRTUALLY EVERY ONE OF THOSE
AMONG THE MILITARY WHO WE WOULD COUNT ON THE GOVERNMENT
SIDE SEEMS AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON AND CONSCIOUS OF

THE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST IT. VIDES, BLANDON, THE ESTADO
MAYOR, THE CHIEFS OF THE SECURITY FORCES, AND OTHER KEY
MEMBERS OF THE "ALTO MANDO" ARE THOROUGHLY TUNED IN TO
THE COUP TALK, AND ALL ARE INCLINED TO DISCOUNT IT. THE
DANGER IS A SPONTANEOUS ACT, SUCH AS THE ASSASSINATION OF



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THE PRESIDENT, PERHAPS ENGINEERED BY ONE OF THE HOT-HEADS, WHICH WOULD SET THE STAGE FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL TURMOIL. TO THAT END, [] IS THIS EVENING MEETING, AS A PRECAUTION, WITH THE CHIEF OF DUARTE'S PERSONAL SECURITY DETAIL TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE AWARE OF EVERYTHING WE ARE AWARE OF. AND BY NOW, THE REMAINDER OF THE SENIOR MILITARY STAFF IS THOROUGHLY ALERT TO OUR CONCERN AND THAT OF THE USG.

10. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE AN APPROACH BY ME TO DUARTE, VIDES, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, BUSTILLO, BEFORE THE AMBASSADOR RETURNS IS NOT YET REQUIRED ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE PRESENTLY KNOW. IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE SOME WORK TO BE DONE WHEN HE RETURNS--AND THAT A DISCUSSION WITH DUARTE, VIDES, AND BUSTILLO WILL BE HIGH ON OUR LIST OF PRIORITIES. A WAY WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE FOUND BY DUARTE TO DEAL WITH OCHOA, WHO IS PROBABLY BEYOND REDEMPTION. THERE WILL BE SOME OTHER MEASURES WE MAY NEED TO CONSIDER AS WELL, SUCH AS POSSIBLY A BEHIND-THE-SCENES VISIT FROM PAUL GORMAN OR PERHAPS DICK WALTERS OR SOMEONE ELSE, BUT THAT IS A DECISION WHICH SHOULD BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE AMBASSADOR HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT. FOR THE TIME BEING, I SEE NO NEED FOR PRECIPITOUS ACTION ON OUR PART.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1426

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 15482

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E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ES
SUBJECT: DEMISE (IT APPEARS) OF A COUP

1. SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE SENSE WE ARE GETTING AFTER THE LAST 24 HOURS' WORTH OF COUP TALK IS THAT THE TENSION AND NERVOUSNESS IS BEGINNING TO DISSIPATE. THE MESSAGE COMING THROUGH FROM DUARTE AND THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM AT THE PRESIDENCY, AND FROM VIDES, BLANDON AND THE SENIOR OFFICERS AT THE ESTADO MAYOR, IS THAT WHILE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CHRISTMASTIME GARRULITY AMONG THE WHINERS IS TO BE EXPECTED AND WILL BE IGNORED, IT'S TIME TO KNOCK IT OFF AND GET BACK TO BUSINESS. AND THE PICTURE WE HAVE BEEN GETTING TODAY--WITHOUT EXCEPTION--IS THAT THE GRUMBLING IS SUBSIDING AND THE TROOPS ARE GOING BACK TO THEIR JOBS. END SUMMARY.

3. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO WIDEN OUR OWN NET AND TODAY TALKED TO MAJ. ALVARO SALAZAR BRENES DUARTE'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, CAPT. DAVID MUNGIA, HEAD OF DUARTE'S PROTECTIVE SECURITY DETAIL, COL. BLANDON, GEN. VIDES, LT. COL. RICARDO CIENFUEGOS (C-5 AT THE ESTADO MAYOR) AND OTHERS IN THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL CAMPS. IT IS CLEAR THAT

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EVERYONE IN TOWN IS NOW WELL AWARE OF THE FACT THAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TALKING LOOSELY ABOUT COUPS. THAT BY ITSELF IS PROBABLY THE BEST POSSIBLE PROTECTION: YOU DON'T TRY TO HOP THE FENCE WHEN ALL THE DOBERMANS ARE WIDE AWAKE.

4. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, BLANDON CANCELLED THE MORNING STAFF BRIEFING AT ESTADO MAYOR THIS MORNING JUST AFTER IT HAD BEGUN. AND HE AND VIDES APPARENTLY MET WITH DUARTE; VIDES SHORTLY AFTERWARD CONVOKED THE ESTADO MAYOR SENIOR STAFF TO TELL THEM DUARTE HAD SIGNED THE GENERAL ORDER (WE WILL DISCREETLY TRY TO OBTAIN A COPY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE). THAT THERE WERE GOING TO BE SOME KEY FIELD COMMANDER CHANGES. AND THAT BLANDON AND BUSTILLO WERE BEING PROMOTED TO GENERAL AND LOPEZ NUILA WAS NOT. HE SAID POINTEDLY AT THE END THAT EVERYONE WAS AWARE THAT THERE HAD BEEN A LOT OF DISCONTENT MANIFESTED LATELY, BUT HE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME FOR IT TO STOP.

5. THUS TWO OF THE IMPORTANT IRRITANTS IN THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HERE HAVE BEEN EASED WITHIN THE LAST 24 HOURS--BY DUARTE'S NATIONWIDE ADDRESS LAST NIGHT IN WHICH HE OFFERED TO RESOLVE THROUGH POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OVER THE ELECTORAL LAW. AND BY BOWING TO THE MAIN-LINE MILITARY OFFICERS' INSISTENCE THAT A "SERVICE" COLONEL (LOPEZ NUILA) NOT BE PROMOTED TO GENERAL--A RANK BY FIRM TRADITION RESERVED FOR THOSE FROM THE "COMBAT ARMS" LINEAGE.

6. WITH THIS. IT IS A LITTLE HARD TO SEE WHAT RECOURSE THE PLOTTERS HAVE. THEY CLEARLY DO NOT NOW HAVE (IF IN FACT THEY EVER HAD) ANY WIDESPREAD DEGREE OF SUPPORT. WHILE SOME HARD-RIGHT MILITARY OFFICERS. GOADED BY BLANDISHMENTS

AND PERHAPS BY PROMISES OF MONEY FROM THEIR FRIENDS IN THE RIGHT-WING BUSINESS SECTOR OF THE OLIGARCHY MIGHT HAVE

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CONTEMPLATED A MILITARY MOVE. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE NOW
TO SUGGEST THAT THEY WOULD GET ANY OF THE LINE-UNIT
BACKING THEY WOULD HAVE TO HAVE TO BE PERSUASIVE. THE
HIGH COMMAND IS THOROUGHLY AWAKE TO THE WORDS THAT HAVE
BEEN FLOWING AND ALERT TO THE DANGERS. THEY ARE SATISFIED
THAT THEY HAVE THINGS WELL IN HAND. THIS MAY REFLECT A
CERTAIN DEGREE OF COMPLACENCY. BUT THEY APPEAR TO KNOW
WHERE THEIR POWER BASES LIE.

7. OCHOA, THE KEY MEMBER AMONG THE PURPORTED PLOTTERS.
NOW HAS AT BEST A VERY WEAK HAND. AND AS FAR AS WE CAN
TELL FROM OUR OWN RESOURCES (AND WE HAVE U.S. MILITARY
"TRAINERS" WITH ALL OF THE KEY UNITS IN THE FIELD), HE
COULD COUNT ON ONLY PERHAPS ONE OR TWO OF THE "IMMEDIATE
REACTION" BATTALIONS IN ADDITION TO HIS OWN 4TH BRIGADE
FORCES, AND AT LEAST ONE OF THESE (LTC STABEN'S "ARCE"
BATTALION IS IN THE EASTERN DEPARTMENTS, TOO FAR FROM
THE CAPITAL TO BE OF ANY IMMEDIATE TACTICAL VALUE TO
OCHOA.) OCHOA'S FORCES, IN ANY EVENT, WOULD HAVE TO
CROSS 1ST BRIGADE TURF TO GET FROM CHALATENANGO TO SAN
SALVADOR, AND BLANDON REMAINS CONFIDENT THAT HE (BLANDON)
HAS THE LOYALTY OF THE 1ST BRIGADE. BUSTILLO'S POSITION
REMAINS ENIGMATIC; ALTHOUGH ANY ROLE HE MIGHT PLAY WOULD
BE CRUCIAL, AT LEAST AT THIS POINT IT LOOKS LIKE HE IS
A NON-PLAYER. SO THE UPSHOT IS THAT EVEN IF THE BAD GUYS
WANTED TO, I DO NOT SEE THAT THEY NOW HAVE WHAT IT TAKES
TO DO ANYTHING SERIOUS.

8. FOR OUR OWN PART, I AM PRUNING BACK OUR OWN SOUNDING
ACTIVITIES, NOT WANTING TO HAVE THE U.S. EMBASSY APPEAR
TO BE OVERLY-APPREHENSIVE. COL. STEELE IS WITH VIDES
RIGHT NOW. AND WHILE I DON'T EXPECT ANY NEWS FROM HIM, HE
MIGHT BE ABLE TO SHED SOME LIGHT FOR SUBSEQUENT
"HISTORICAL" REPORTING. ONE OF THE DAO ATTACHES WILL
BE SEEING STABEN LATER TODAY--WE HEARD HE WOULD BE IN

TOWN--AND I HAVE ASKED THAT A MARKER BE DISCREETLY BUT
FIRMLY IMPLANTED ABOUT THE U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD ANY NON-



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 CONSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITY. AND, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, COL.
 STEELE WAS INVITED (OUT OF THE BLUE) BY OCHOA YESTERDAY
 AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION TO VISIT HIM AT HIS CHALATENANGO
 HEADQUARTERS ON MONDAY, AND I HAVE TOLD HIM TO GO AHEAD
 AND USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SNIFF AROUND AND MAKE CLEAR
 IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS WHAT OUR POSITION WOULD BE IF ANY-
 THING UNTOWARD (ANYTHING AT ALL) HAPPENS HERE. I HAVE
 ALSO ASKED MILGP AND DAO TO HAVE THEIR PEOPLE. IN ALL OF
 THEIR DAILY WORKING CONTACTS, MAKE SURE THE ESAF--AT ALL
 LEVELS--KNOWS THE LEVEL OF U.S. TOLERANCE (I.E. NONE).

9.

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10. BEYOND THAT, WE'LL TAKE COUNSEL ABOUT FURTHER ACTION
 WHEN THE AMBASSADOR RETURNS. WE DON'T WANT HIM TO THINK
 THE ONLY THING REMAINING FOR HIM TO DO HERE IS PACK HIS
 HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS.

PASSAGE

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